

TOM HORNE
FIRST ANNUAL
STATE OF EDUCATION SPEECH
January 6, 2004

This is my first annual State of Education speech. We are here at the Rose Lane School in order to honor this school. This is a Title I, highly performing school. A Title I school is a school designated by the federal government as qualifying for help, because it is a high poverty school. To be a highly performing school, the school must not only have a large percentage of its students proficient in reading, writing, and mathematics, but it must be in the top 25% of schools statewide in the number of students who exceed proficiency. For a high poverty school to reach that level of academic distinction is a wonderful accomplishment. Special congratulations are due Dr. Linda Calafano, the principal, for her leadership; Dr. Robert Jones, the superintendent of the district; the Madison School Board; the teachers; the students; and especially the parents whose role in this kind of achievement is so crucial, and often underestimated.

Today is exactly one year from the day I was sworn in to office. The first part of today's speech is the report on what has been achieved in the first year; the second part is a roadmap for initiatives for next year.

One of the things that I emphasized last year was that we were changing the emphasis in the Department of Education, under which enforcement would be secondary, and the primary role of the Department would be service. The very first thing, I want to express my thanks to the people at the Department, for taking this change to heart, from top to bottom. Whenever I speak at schools, I am constantly getting comments on how much more service oriented the Department

has become, and how much more help it is giving to the schools in raising their academic standards.

At the same time, as I will be detailing for you in a few minutes, we've implemented major changes in education in Arizona. I believe these changes will have an extremely positive effect on the academic achievement of the students. On behalf of those students throughout the state, I want to especially thank members of the State Board of Education and the legislature, in working with me to implement constructive changes in education. Change always produces insecurity, and opposition, but we all know that Bill Gates would be out of business if he were still trying to sell Microsoft 1.0. I also want to thank groups who have furnished members of advisory committees, to help me fashion the highest quality of recommendations to the legislature and the State Board: Arizona School Administrators, Arizona Education Association, Arizona School Boards Association, research professors, psychometric test advisors, and business and parent groups.

I. Promises Made, Promises Kept

For the first part, the report on the achievements the first year, the theme is "promises made, promises kept." A year ago, I summarized eight promises that had been made during the preceding campaign. We will go over each one of those eight promises, changing only the order.

I. English Immersion

The first promise related to students who came to school not speaking English. I said that they must learn English as quickly as possible. In March, we issued guidelines eliminating waiver

abuse. Previously, because of waiver abuse, students who were not proficient in English were allowed to languish in bi-lingual classes year after year, without ever becoming truly proficient in English. In August, the Attorney General's office declared these guidelines to be legal. We checked with the 20 largest school districts; all indicated that they intended to comply with these guidelines. In one case, we had to threaten to withhold funds from a school district that had improperly placed 500 students in bi-lingual programs. Those 500 students were promptly moved into English immersion classes, where they can become proficient in English, and soar academically.

Thirty-five monitors from the Department checked to be sure that schools were properly implementing English immersion for English language learning students. The proposition that was overwhelmingly passed by the voters three years ago is finally being enforced. Students coming to school not proficient in English are learning English as quickly as possible, so they can compete with native English speakers, and there is no longer any limitation on their ability to achieve academically. That is a promise made and a promise kept!

A year ago, I stated that it was not enough to enforce the initiative. We must make sure that every school is serious about teaching English as intensely, and rapidly as possible. Last spring we conducted a Super Seminar for over 400 English language teachers from all over the state of Arizona, teaching them best practices in English immersion. Even a number of our pro bi-lingual critics have spoken about how valuable the summit was in conveying skills to the English language teachers. We are committed to a continuing, intensive effort, to help the schools reach the highest standards in teaching English quickly and effectively to these students.

2. *Student Accountability*

Second, on AIMS, I promised that for the current deadline, for this year's sophomores, any student who received a diploma would have passed a reasonable test, so we'd know that students would have the reasonable skills and knowledge one expects from a high school graduate. When I arrived into the department, there was a section called "AIMS Ed", in which they were developing a system whereby a student who could not pass the test could still graduate if the student did a class project. I eliminated that section. It is history. We will no longer graduate students who can not read their own diplomas. If a student receives a diploma, the student will have passed a reasonable test. That is also a promise made and a promise kept!

I also promised that the test would be reasonable. Until last year, all the questions were developed by an out of state company, and some of them were not as good a match to the standards being tested at the schools as we would like. This year, 50 percent of the questions have been developed by Arizona teachers to match the state standards. Next year, that will be true of 100 percent of the questions. In Massachusetts, they gave the students five chances to pass the test, as we are doing. Ninety percent of the students eventually passed. Ten percent failed. When they looked at the records of the 10 percent, almost all of them had bad attendance records. Our message to parents is that if students attend school, they should pass the test, because the test questions will be precisely matched to the standards that the teachers are teaching in the classroom. But if they don't send them to school, we can't teach them.

3. *School Accountability*

Third, I promised to hold accountable not only the students for the AIMS test, but also to hold the schools accountable, and to have a fair and accurate accountability system. I specifically promised two changes to make the accountability system more fair. First, we need to measure the amount of progress students make in school, not just the absolute level of achievement. This is especially needed to be fair to schools who do an excellent job in poor neighborhoods. The students may have started behind, but the reality of the school is how much academic progress they made.

Second, we must measure more than just how many students reach proficiency, as was true of our system at the time, the Federal system, and other states. A successful education system must motivate and stimulate the brightest students and the average students, and not just focus on bringing up the students at the bottom, and I promised to change the system to pay attention also to the progress of the average and brightest students.

We proposed nine major changes to the student accountability system, including those two, and all nine were adopted with the help of the state legislature, and the State Board of Education. Promises made, promises kept!

Having made these changes, we now have a far more fair and accurate accountability system. For example, we now have 300 excelling or highly performing schools, so that we can accurately point to examples of excellence for our own citizens, and out-of-state businesses thinking about moving to Arizona, where last year there were only three.

4. Classroom Discipline

Fourth, I promised that we would ensure classroom discipline. We began a discipline initiative to help bring the message to our schools that proper discipline is a necessary pre-condition to academic achievement. The discipline section on our web site brings numerous resources to schools to help with their discipline programs. Our web site is ade.az.gov.

We have partnered with our state's three major universities to bring school-wide positive behavior support programs to the schools. We've collected best practices and character education programs, and brought classroom management and school-wide positive behavior support workshops to the schools. We have prepared a pamphlet for teachers and administrators that advises them on references for behavior rules, such as a statute that I helped pass when I was in the legislature, that: "The principal should not return a pupil to the classroom from which the pupil was removed without the teacher's consent unless the committee determines that the return of the pupil to that classroom is the best or only practicable alternative."

5. Budget Discipline

Fifth, I spoke about a different kind of discipline, budget discipline. I worked in partnership with the Governor, and with school districts superintendents, in a voluntary program to move money from the district office to the classroom, where the taxpayers expect it to be spent: on better teacher compensation and smaller class size. The school superintendents have worked hard to make this a successful joint program.

For example, in one district, there was a 20% reduction in district office administrators, for a savings of \$1.5 million, and 51 central office resource teachers went back to the classroom or retired, enabling the district to put an additional \$.5 million into classroom budgets.

6. History Standards

Sixth, I promised to reform social studies and history standards. Many people were shocked to learn that when I took office, the history standards were that high school students did not learn about the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, the Revolutionary War, or the ideas on which this country is founded. The last time they learned about those things was in the seventh grade, when they were thirteen years old. Similarly, the last time students in world history learned the Greco-Roman basis for western civilization was in the sixth grade, when they were twelve years old. In July, the State Board adopted my recommendation, and from now on our high school students will learn about our War of Independence, Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, the ideas on which this country is founded, and the Greco-Roman basis for western civilization. Promises made, promises kept!

7. Content Rich Reading

Seventh, I promised to encourage content-rich reading. As students learn reading, they should be reading about social studies, science, and literature, and not just empty stories. The success of this initiative is illustrated by a letter I received from Gail Caret to, the librarian at this school: “When we got your letter about content-rich reading , we saw the relevance to what we were trying to accomplish as well. We will be working together with our parents to accomplish our

goal for each child to read 20 content books at the primary level or 600 pages at the fourth grade level.”

8. Character Education

Eighth, I promised to promote the teaching of character education. We must produce well balanced graduates. We are working very hard on the academic side, as you have heard. But we must also produce graduates of high character. We created a Character Education and Development Division which trained over 5,000 teachers and students through 100 teacher inservices, community presentations and conferences. We distributed over 50,000 character education parent books, comic books, and inserts, at no charge. Over 500 schools in Arizona now have formal character education programs.

Promises made, promises kept! It has been an exciting first year.

II. The Three Initiatives

The Department’s 2004 initiatives are:

1. better schools,
2. better teachers,
3. better curriculum.

These three initiatives have a direct, daily impact on each and every child in our schools. I believe these three initiatives are at the heart of what makes a quality education. With these initiatives, Arizona’s children will have the educational opportunities to greatly increase their academic performance.

1. School Improvement

As we start a second year, we need to consider the three stages of school improvement. Stage one is fair and accurate measurement of academic achievement; stage two is helping those schools who are shown by reliable measurement to need help; and stage three is direct state intervention in those schools that can not improve on their own.

In our first year, we have substantially accomplished stage one, a fair and accurate measurement system, although we will continue to propose improvements to the State Board. The focus for the second year now becomes an intensive program to help those schools identified as being in need of help. This process, centering around Solutions Teams to help the schools, is well under way. Over 250 outstanding Arizona teachers and administrators have applied for these teams.

We have made a change from past practice that will improve efficiency and use of tax dollars.

Traditionally, when the Department of Education had a task like this to perform, it hired an out-of-state consultant. In my view, this is not wise stewardship of public funds. We can pay outstanding Arizona teachers and administrators less than half the amount that consultants charge, enabling us to deliver over twice the services to the schools. There are other major benefits as well.

By identifying outstanding Arizona teachers and administrators to serve on Solutions Teams, we validate and honor our own high achieving educators. Because teaching is often the best way to

learn, they bring back to their own school districts many of the skills that they acquire in order to help other schools.

Some improvement teams are in schools as we speak. Others will be arriving over the next two months. In the original plan, Solutions Teams were to be sent to schools that had been declared to be failing schools. I sent these teams out a year early, to help the schools prevent themselves from falling into the failing label. This is one example of the philosophical change I announced a year ago: that the Department of Education would be service oriented, and enforcement would be secondary.

But what if some schools demonstrate that they cannot improve on their own? The first time that I can recommend to the State Board that we have direct state intervention into a school, that is failing to make progress, will be October of this year. In preparation for this, we are bringing together stakeholders from all aspects of the education community, and the public, to attempt to build consensus behind the best methods of intervening to increase student achievement. Just as we never again want a student to graduate who can not read his own diploma, so we want never again in Arizona to have a school where the student goes to school but does not learn.

2. *Highly Qualified Professionals*

A second major initiative for this coming year is to focus on the development of much larger numbers of highly qualified professionals: teachers and administrators. Nothing can be more important than that. A study in

Tennessee measured the outcomes of students, otherwise equal, who did or did not have highly qualified teachers. All other things being equal, a student who had a highly qualified teacher for three years in a row could expect to be 40 percentile points above the student who did not have a highly qualified teacher for three years in a row. That would be a difference between the 80th percentile and the 40th percentile, an incredible difference.

I have established a working group with the Deans and representative professors of all our Colleges of Education.

First, we must break down artificial barriers, so that it is easier for bright students to enter the teaching profession, either as undergraduates, or as those who want to come into teaching mid career.

Second, we must greatly improve the use of the time that is spent in teacher preparation, to give those skills needed to be effective in the classroom. This should involve less theoretical lectures and more practical training. Those interested in details can review a speech I gave to the Board of Regents on the subject at our website.

Third, in addition to improving the training of new teachers, we have an extensive program to work with the teachers already in the classroom. We are sponsoring professional development

seminars focusing on quality teaching and learning. They emphasize effective teaching strategies and the use of technology. For rural and remote areas, we are emphasizing web-based professional development. We are sponsoring technology conferences in partnership with the Arizona Technology in Education Alliance. And, we are forming a stakeholders group to develop a statewide mentoring and induction program, because over 30% of teachers leave the classroom within the first three to five years, and we need to provide a support system as they begin their careers. This will help retain promising teachers.

I am announcing a major change in Reading First, the program that trains existing teachers to teach reading. When I took office, there were plans to spend over \$100 million of federal money for this purpose, over the next six years. But the program was focused on only 63 of Arizona's 1800 schools. The program is universally recognized as having extremely high quality, but 63 schools does not provide a sufficiently comprehensive solution for the state as a whole. I am announcing today that the program is now available to all of our 1800 schools who want to participate. The funds appropriated for materials, and for teachers' training, are already committed to the initial 63 schools. But part of the technical assistance to be offered to all schools will be training in how they can use available funding sources to implement the components of the Reading First Program, whether or not they are receiving targeted assistance grants. This can include Title I funds, Proposition 301, existing textbook adoption funds, existing continuing education program, and other alternative funding sources. We will provide all the other services so that all of our teachers in the early grades, throughout the state, become highly effective teachers of reading.

Beginning this month, we will sponsor regional professional development and training that is consistent in content and locally accessible. This training is designed in two tiers: Tier One for district and school leadership, a training of trainers model, will focus on what leaders need to know and be able to do to implement a reading improvement plan. Tier Two, for teachers of reading, uses a “teachers teaching teachers” model, and focuses on instructional practice. In addition to professional development, we will also be offering technical assistance to schools in the selection and use of assessments and reading materials, and assistance to literacy coaches and teachers through our County Reading Specialists.

The final part of our initiative for highly qualified professionals is the development of an Arizona School Leadership Academy. Every study shows that outstanding schools have outstanding principals. We are currently working in collaboration with stakeholder groups to develop the Arizona Leadership Academy, which is dedicated to supporting the recruitment, development, and retention of outstanding school administrators across the state.

3. Content Rich Curriculum

Our third initiative is to expand the idea of content-rich reading, to emphasize content-rich curriculum. One unfortunate, unintended consequence of the testing culture, has been that some schools focus on the subjects tested – reading, writing and mathematics – to the exclusion of the other vital subjects, science, social studies and the arts. We, at the Department, are leaning hard against the wind. We emphasize to all of our schools that we cannot produce students who are ignorant in science and social studies. Those subjects must remain an essential part of the curriculum. Indeed, studying them properly can also be a good way to prepare for tests in

reading, writing and mathematics. For example, good content background knowledge in science and social studies is essential to good reading comprehension. Students need to learn science in part for those from whom science will part of their careers. But for those for whom it won't, they still must understand the world around them, must be able to judge public issues involving science, and especially must understand the scientific method, so they can understand how we seek truth.

One of my favorite passages, in emphasizing the importance, for example, of studying history, as well as literacy in general, is from Gibbons' *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*,

“The Germans, in the age of Tacitus, were unacquainted with the use of letters; and the use of letters is the principal circumstance that distinguishes a civilized people from a herd of savages incapable of knowledge or reflection. Without that artificial help, the human memory soon dissipates or corrupts the ideas entrusted to her charge; and the nobler faculties of the mind, no longer supplied with models or with materials, gradually forget their powers; the judgment becomes feeble and lethargic, the imagination languid or irregular. Fully to apprehend this important truth, let us attempt in an improved society, to calculate the immense distance between the man of learning and the *illiterate* peasant. The former, by reading and reflection, multiplies his own experience and lives in distant ages and remote countries; whilst the latter, rooted to a single spot, and confined to a few years of existence, surpasses, but very little, his fellow-laborer the ox in the exercise of his mental faculties. The same and even a greater, difference will be found between nations than between individuals; and we may safely pronounce that, without some species of writing, no people has ever preserved the faithful annals of their history, ever made any considerable progress in the abstract sciences, or ever possessed, in any tolerable degree of perfection, the useful and agreeable arts of life.”

Equally important, we must enrich every student with a thorough exposure to the arts. Sometimes, school boards, faced with financial problems, have cut the arts first thing. I have a direct appeal to them: Please don't! Someone once said that the United States is the only society that passed from ignorance to decadence, without going through the usual intervening stage of civilization. We can not surrender to that. A student who has not been taught the deeper forms

of beauty has not received an education. And numerous studies have shown that students involved in the arts actually perform better in other academic subjects.

The most recent study was here in Arizona. In 2002, the Tucson Unified School District received a grant from the U.S. Department of Education to fund OMA – Opening Minds through the Arts. This is a program which integrates arts learning, specifically music, dance and drama, into the classrooms of five Tucson elementary schools. Kindergarteners work with a string or woodwind trio, first graders write their own opera, second graders experience dance, third graders all get recorders, and fourth graders all get violins to learn. Based on scientific research which ties artistic learning with academic learning, the hope was that students would not only benefit from richer arts experiences, but would also perform better academically than their peers at schools not participating in Opening Minds through the Arts (“OMA”).

Research was conducted by WestEd, a federally funded education research laboratory. They found that students receiving the arts education outscored similar students not receiving arts education, in every academic area. For example, in language, the scores were 30% higher. Interestingly, for the Latino students, the language scores were 55% higher. Latino students receiving this arts education are closing the academic achievement gap with their non-Latino peers.

During 2004, the Arizona Department of Education will take Opening Minds through the Arts (“OMA”) statewide. I hope to make the word “OMA” a familiar name in Arizona. The Department will begin a 3-year, \$1 million replication project financed by Federal funding of

exemplary and innovative programs. It will bring OMA to pilot schools throughout the state. We will study why OMA has such a positive impact on academic achievement, especially for Latino students. We also hope to bring on board support from business and foundation partners, so that still more schools can participate. When I talk about the importance of arts, one of my favorite quotations is from John Adams, who wrote in a letter to Abigail Adams: “I study war and politics, so my children can study business and commerce, so their children can study literature and the arts.”

One final word on the emphasis on the content-rich curriculum, and especially social studies. Sometimes, I get blank stares when I talk about the Greco-Roman basis for western civilization. But when I was a student, we learned that Greece was the first civilization to emphasize individual excellence. The definition of happiness was: “the exercise of vital power is, along lines of excellence, in a life affording them scope.” A small number of Greeks could defeat a much larger number of others in war, because the Greeks were individuals who could think for themselves. Excellence “arête” was to be sought in everything that we do. Not some things, not most things, but everything.

We need to be reminded of this, because it is a natural human failing to sometimes think that one conserves energy by settling for mediocrity. That is a delusion. It is the pursuit of excellence, in everything we do, makes life a joy to live. If every student, every teacher, every administrator, every citizen strives for “arête,” excellence, at all times, then we would easily achieve our narrow goal at the Department of Education: that the students learn substantially more, and that they demonstrate this in higher test scores.

I. Conclusion

A year ago, I promised that the Department of Education would be a place of intellectual passion and intellectual ferment. One of the things we have done to keep this promise is to require that the top 12 executives in this department read and discuss books on educational reform, and on leadership, by educators, business leaders, and political leaders. My favorite quote from all that reading and discussing was stated by Colin Powell: “Optimism is a force multiplier.” I want to thank this school for giving us a reasonable basis for this optimism. As a Title I, highly performing school, you have demonstrated how rewarding and satisfying is the pursuit of “arête” of excellence. May we all follow your example. Thank you.